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ABSTRACT

This Personalized Activity Kit describes various ways to gather school/community concerns--questionnaires, student speak-outs, community concerns conferences, and interviews. A variety of methods should be used in gathering concerns. Concerns gathering usually begins with an identification of current district goals. From the list of goals, a questionnaire can be drafted to sample public opinion. Some important guidelines for drawing up the questionnaire are to keep the questionnaire and the questions brief and to the point, to include options to praise as well as criticize school operations, and to decide beforehand how the information is to be recorded and reported. A trial run or pilot test of the questionnaire should be accomplished prior to its widespread use. Appendixes contain guidelines, exercises, activities, and other related information. (Author/IRT)

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A SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT - ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS KIT

PAK #2.1 - GOALS REVISION - GATHERING CONCERNS

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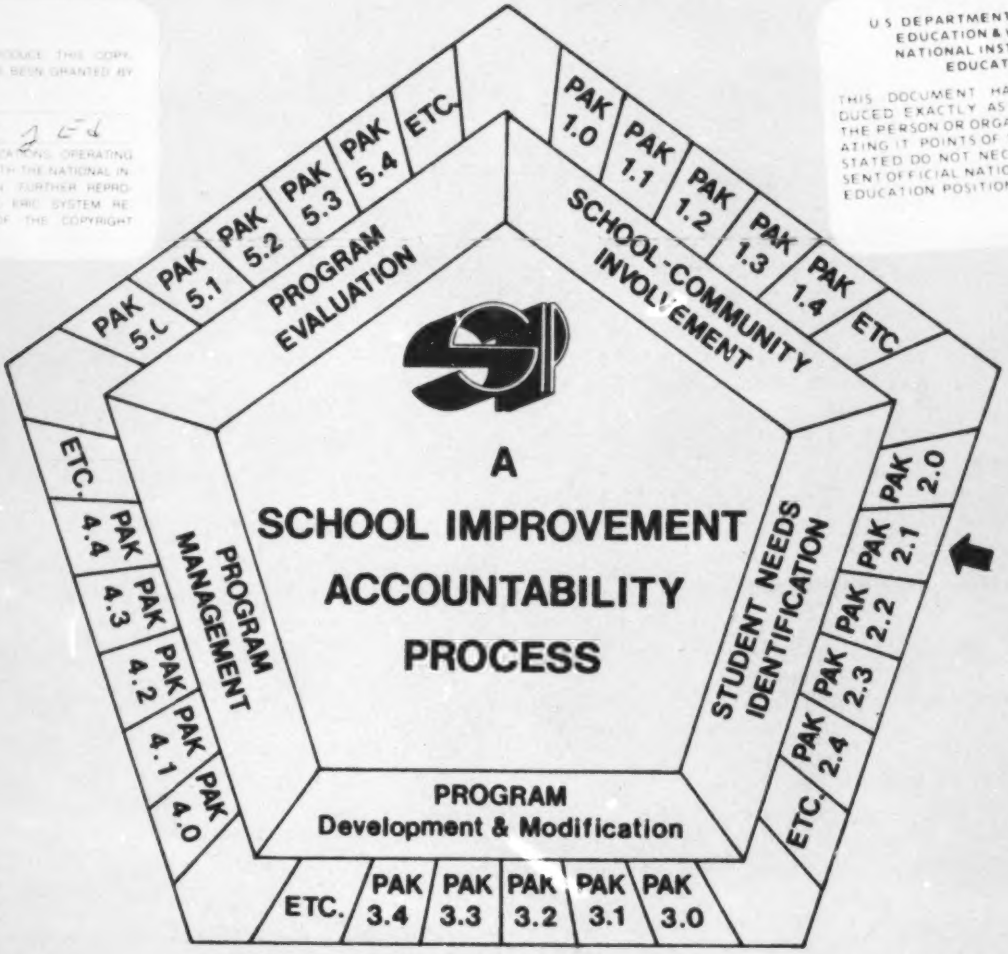

Personalized Activity Kit (PAK) for use as:

- Individualized Study Guide
- Small Group Study Guide
- Workshop Facilitator's Guide

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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A SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT - ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS KIT

PAK #2.1 - GOALS REVISION - GATHERING CONCERNS

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Denver, Colorado
July 1975

This PAK was written in 1973 by members of the District Planning and Accountability Services Unit.

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DIRECTIONS FOR THE USE OF THE PAK

Each PAK is designed to be used in three alternative ways: 1) an individual user can work through the packet on his own; 2) a small group may work co-operatively; or, 3) a group of participants may be involved in a workshop situation under the leadership of a facilitator. Experience indicates that the latter is the most desirable situation. While an individual may work through the materials on his own, he misses those shared experiences which come as learners interact in a group situation.

PLEASE NOTE

Because this PAK will be used by many people in your district, please mark only the worksheets supplied by your instructor. Do not mark the pages of this PAK. Sample transparencies and worksheets (for duplication) are included in Appendices A and B.

If you are using PAK materials in a group workshop situation, consult Appendix A for detailed instructions. The diagram on the cover page and diagrams for Appendix A may be used to make overhead transparencies.

If you are working through the PAK individually, follow the general directions listed below:

- Read content of the PAK.
- Refer to Appendix A, page 2, for additional instructions.
- Do the exercises on worksheets copies from Appendix B. (when included)
- Read the bibliography (when included).

REVISING GOALS AND GATHERING CONCERNS

Purpose:

This PAK describes various ways to gather school/community concerns: questionnaires (opinionnaires), student speak-outs, community concerns conferences and interviews. A variety of mixtures is recommended so that the advantages of citizen involvement can be realized.

Dealing with Goal, Need and Concern:

A Goal is a general statement of purpose or direction. It describes "what ought to be."

A Need is defined as the discrepancy (gap) between "what ought to be" and "what is" or "what exists."

An educational Concern is a feeling, opinion, belief, worry or fear about a situation. A concern may or may not be a real student need. Whether or not the concern becomes a need is determined by a Concerns-Analysis (which is described in PAK #2.3).

Examples of a Goal Statement (which describes "what ought to be") would look like these given below.

As a result of the school experience, the student:

- Will better understand man and society.
- Will learn to understand himself better.
- Will learn how to prepare himself and will be prepared for the world of work.
- Will learn how to identify, define and analyze problems.
- Will learn how to think for himself.

Examples of concerns are given below:

- Our schools need to teach more patriotism.
- We ought to have a new gym.
- Our teachers don't pay enough attention to the individual child.
- Our children don't read well.

Each of the concerns potentially can be refined into a real student need statement, using the Concerns-Analysis approach. (See PAK #2.3. Examples of need statements can also be found in this PAK.)

The first step of a Student Needs Identification is to analyze district goal statements. If no goal statements currently exist, the major task will be to develop goal statements. In either case, goal statements should be educational statements of purpose that a representative committee of professional staff, students, parents and taxpayers agree are the most important purposes of education in their district.

Examine District Goal Statements:

If your district already has an official statement of goals, as most districts do, then obtain copies of these for your committee. If a record of the methods and discussions involved in formulating the goals is available, particularly if the action was taken recently, this information can also be helpful and should be obtained. It is important to remember, however, that these statements may not be based on identified needs and may not represent the collective thinking of your community. For example, student goals do not always coincide with parental goals; parental goals may not coincide with teacher goals. Identified needs may not have been taken into consideration when these goals were developed, or the needs may have changed. For this reason, goal statements must always be considered temporary working statements that will be changed as the situation for which they were developed changes. With this consideration in mind, these statements of goals can be used.

If goal statements for the district are not available, it is important that a tentative set be developed. One way for your committee to begin writing a set of goals is for each committee member to write one goal statement. Then the committee should pool these goals, discuss them, list them in order of importance and discard those which are inappropriate. Student groups, teacher groups, citizen groups, parent groups - and other community groups -- can be asked to do the same things. By grouping similar statements into various categories a single statement can be written for each of the categories. Now, a working set of goals is ready for use.

Use the stated goals as the basis for the questionnaire. For example, "Students should gain preparation for the world of work," a possible questionnaire item would be:

1. Helping students select a career is:

    a. Very important
    b. Important
    c. Relatively important
    d. Not important at all

1A. Our schools are doing:

    a. Very good job
    b. Above average job
    c. Fair job
    d. Poor job

In using these two scales the committee can begin to identify what the highly important educational goals are among staff, students and concerned citizens. Where there is a gap between importance and the level of success in meeting these goals, the committee is discovering broad areas of concern. For example, if Item 1 above is marked *very important* and the level of success is marked *poor*, or, on the other hand if the answer is *not important* at all but the level of success is rated *very high*, the schools may be emphasizing the wrong things in terms of what the community wants.

Some Do's and Don'ts in Opinion Sampling:

Good questionnaires take care and deliberation to construct. The following suggestions are offered as guidelines:

1. *Keep the questions short; rambling questions often discourage or annoy people.(Use layman's language.)*

2. *Keep the total questionnaire short -- two pages is a long questionnaire. People will tend to discard a questionnaire that is demanding and time-consuming.*

3. *Ask questions about which the community is likely to be informed.*

4. *Classification questions about age, sex, occupation, etc., should be left to the end of the questionnaire so as to avoid crowding the opening.*

5. *Lists of concerns about school should provide ways to include praise as well as criticism.*

6. *On a given topic general questions should precede specific ones. Remember that questionnaires can be used for many purposes at any of several points in the School Improvement Accountability Process.*

7. *Decide whether to use open-ended or closed questions. Open-ended questions allow people to say anything they wish to say; however, closed questions force people to choose one answer. The open-ended question is more effective in soliciting personal opinions and observations, require little time to prepare, but a lot of time to analyze results. Closed questions produce greater uniformity of response (fewer choices of answers), are harder to prepare, but are easier to analyze. The choice of questions depends largely on the purpose of the questionnaire.*

   In goal revision and concerns gathering include blanks so that additional goals can be identified. As open-ended questions are difficult and time consuming both to answer and to analyze, one or two blanks are usually enough.

8. *Pose questions in such a way as to generate and gather concerns, and not solutions. For example, "Should we offer foreign language in the elementary school?" deals with a solution, not a concern. A better question might be phrased, "Should students have the opportunity to learn a language other than English?"*

9. *Frequently, goal statements are written as follows:*

   "To help the student become actively prepared to cope with change."

   As written, this statement represents an institutional goal, describing the aspiration or intent of school or community personnel to assist the learner. While it will be very important later on for the staff to identify the ways in which they will assist learners in meeting their objectives, at this point it is necessary to focus on goal statements which state what students ought to do. Therefore, it is best to write goal statements in which the performer is the student. For example:

   "Students should possess the skills and abilities to enable them to cope with change."

   In developing your questionnaire, decide whether to use your goal statements as stated above or to rewrite each statement as a question. For example:

   DO: Students should possess the skills and abilities to enable them to cope with change.

   DO: Should students possess the skills and abilities to enable them to cope with change?

   DON'T: Should we offer more social science mini-courses? (Solution-oriented)

10. *Decide upon the minimal number of responses from the community that will be acceptable.*

11. *Develop a plan for distributing the questionnaires. Will you mail them or hand carry them to people? One pitfall to avoid is printing the form in the local paper. Those people with vested interests, constructive or not, will be mainly those who answer. These responses tend to skew your results and do not reflect true community ideas.*

12. *Decide upon the procedure that will be used to record answers to the questionnaire.*

Pilot Testing:

It is generally advisable to pilot test any questionnaire with a small group of people. These persons should be typical of those who will be sampled in the community at large. Besides obtaining their reactions to the questions and suggestions for improvements, pilot testing forces the questionnaire writer into thinking through how the data will be analyzed. How will open-ended questions be summarized? How will answers to closed questions be tabulated? Can any modifications be made now that will simplify procedures later? If these questions are answered satisfactorily, the pilot testing has been done successfully.

Sampling Community Opinion:

In order to collect opinions in larger communities it will probably be advisable to draw a sample of the population rather than try to obtain opinions from everyone. This has an advantage in terms of cost and also in terms of the time it takes to tabulate and analyze responses. One word of caution is in order in using sampling. How does one go about obtaining a sample which would be likely to represent all those persons living in the community? The total size of the group should be large enough to provide accurate information.

An initial decision will involve deciding how large your sample will be in proportion to the size of your district, taking into consideration that your sample should be representative of your district's population. It will be necessary to obtain certain classifying information from each person (such as ethnic background, age, economic status), so that the committee can verify what proportion these people represent in the total population. If a certain minority group represents 40% of the district's population, they should compose 40% of the people in the sample.

One common method is area sampling. A map of the jurisdiction is divided into districts. Next, the pattern to be followed in selecting households would be to move clockwise around each block in the region and choose every fourth house. The number "4" is an arbitrary one. Any number might be selected. Your committee will have to make this decision. This selection procedure may be used for personal interviews, questionnaires and other methods of surveying opinions.

Another useful method of sampling is called systematic random sampling. Random means that all people concerned have an equal chance of being chosen. Telephone lists assume that everyone has a telephone. Better sources of names are lists such as city directories.

Recording answers is called tabulating, and determining what the answers mean is called analyzing. Sampling, tabulating, and analyzing require specialized training. If you have received expert help in developing your opinionnaire, then that same person can assist you with these activities.

Conducting a Student Speak-Up Session:

Students represent a particularly valuable source of information. During a speak-up representative students are asked to evaluate objectively and make recommendations for improvement in their respective schools. The topics and areas that the students will discuss are not limited in any way. Hopefully, the discussions will include curriculum, student activities, standards of dress and deportment and other relevant topics that are of importance to students.

In order for the project to be a meaningful experience, the following specific procedure is recommended - with modifications whenever needed:

1. *A discussion guide should be prepared.*
2. *At least two class periods should be allotted for the discussion groups.*
3. *Each class has an overall group leader and recorder -- appointed by the teacher.*

4. *To implement the first day's discussion, the class is divided into four equal groups. It is suggested that this grouping be random. (An efficient grouping would be on the basis of the student's last name.) The small groups elect a leader and recorder. The prepared guide becomes the basis for their discussion.*

5. *At the conclusion of the first day's session, the documents prepared by each small group will be given to the class leader for study prior to the 2nd day's session.*

6. *The class leader will conduct the second session involving the class as a whole.*

7. *At the conclusion of the second session, the class leader and the recorder will prepare a final draft that is to be mailed directly to those responsible for the Student Needs Identification. The preliminary small group discussion documents are to accompany the final draft. The final draft must be clearly identified.*

8. *The teacher is not to be present during either discussion session nor is the teacher to examine or allow any other staff member to examine the students' documents.*

Conducting a Community Concerns Conference:

A concerns conference is an organized attempt to identify those educational problems which currently exist or are likely to emerge out of the trends that may be observed. It is a way to tap systematically the ideas and perceptions of a greater number of people in a very short time. In general, the conference calls together several hundred persons who are oriented as to the job they are expected to accomplish. For increased credibility on the part of the audience it sometimes is helpful to call in an outside expert.

Then the large conference is broken up into small discussion groups and from these come as many as several hundred ideas, each recorded on a separate card. These cards identify problems in the field of education as well as opinions of committee members and suggestions for meeting these problems or concerns.

Telling the Difference between Concerns Stated as Problems and Concerns Stated as Solutions:

Concerns are usually stated either as problems ("what's") or solutions ("how's"). The ability to tell the difference is an important skill for your committee. People tend to jump into solutions before they know what the real problem is.

Problems stated as concerns do not include such things as individualized instruction, hiring more teachers, increasing salaries or using multi-media instructional materials (all of these are "how's"). In one district under concerns about the instructional program, the committee kept reading statements such as the following:

- *Art and craft courses*
- *Girls physical education*
- *Foreign languages - French, Russian*
- *Vocal music instruction*
- *Creative dramatics*
- *Speech and debate*

Again, these are all solutions ("how's"). What the community was really trying to say was we need more course selections and opportunities for our students; a broader number of curriculum offerings. This then is the real concern the people involved were trying to state - the "what" -- "We need more curriculum offerings." So you can use concerns stated as solutions to derive what the problem is.

After Concerns Have Been Gathered:

If a questionnaire is used, the results should be reported by the number and percentages of each group expressing a specific concern. For example:

CONCERN:

Our students' reading skills are inadequate.

200 parents and citizens	-	*76% agreed.*
182 students	-	*68% agreed*
153 staff members	-	*82% agreed*

If each concern expressed has been written on a 3x5 inch card, then the cards should be sorted into categories. It helps to use different colored cards for each of the groups - students, staff and citizens. The same type of information can then be determined and reported.

Those categories with the most expressions of concern should be dealt with first in the Concerns-Analysis (PAKs 2.2 and 2.3).

EVALUATIVE EXERCISE #1. DISTINGUISHING LEARNER-ORIENTED CONCERNS FROM SOLUTION-ORIENTED CONCERNS.

Each of the following statements of concern were taken from those gathered in a large needs assessment study. You are to indicate by a check mark in the appropriate column on a copy of the answer sheet found in Appendix B whether each of the concern statements represents a student-oriented concern and a potential need (problem) or might be more appropriately classified as a solution oriented concern.

DIRECTIONS: Mark your answers either S.O. (solution oriented) or L.O. (learner oriented) problems.

1. *Schools inadequately prepare students for occupations.*
2. *There is a need for more programmed instruction.*
3. *Additional team teaching is needed to improve services to pupils.*
4. *School shops are inadequate.*
5. *Reading performance of some junior high school students should be improved.*
6. *Students lack competence in communication skills.*
7. *There is a need for more adequate school buildings.*
8. *There is a lack of student interest and involvement in social problems.*
9. *There is a need for flexible scheduling in the local schools.*
10. *Schools do a poor job of preparing students to assume responsibility.*
11. *The individualization of instruction is inadequate in the local schools.*
12. *In some local schools general morale of both students and teachers is low.*
13. *The development of computational skills in the local schools is poor.*
14. *Elective course offerings in the local school curriculum need to be strengthened.*
15. *Students should be grouped by ability for instructional purposes.*
16. *Student handwriting is often illegible.*
17. *Student grammatical usage needs to be improved.*
18. *There is a need for more extra-curricular programs in order to improve student morale.*
19. *There is a need to educate learners in drug use and abuse.*
20. *There is a need to improve the teacher inservice training programs in the local schools.*

Answers are on Appendix B-2.

SUMMARY

A need is defined as the difference between "what ought to be" and "what is." Consequently, a Student Needs Identification must concern itself with goal statements ("what ought to be"), and statements about "what is" or "what exists."

We generally begin by identifying current goals of the district. Usually these are available in published form, although sometimes they are not. If these are unavailable, an alternative is to have committee members list and discuss a set of tentative goals.

From the list of goals, official or tentative, a questionnaire can be drafted to sample public opinion. Some important guidelines for drawing up the questionnaire are:

1. *Keep the questionnaire and the questions brief and to the point.*
2. *Include options to praise as well as criticize school operation.*
3. *Decide beforehand how the information is to be recorded and reported.*

A trial run or pilot testing of the questionnaire should be accomplished prior to its widespread use.

Rather than attempt to poll all members of the community, some form of sampling is recommended. The methods of area sampling and systematic random sampling are suggested as useful for this purpose. In designing the sample, tabulating, and analyzing results, it may be useful to consult someone with expert knowledge in the field or to utilize reference material.

Two additional sources for gathering concerns for the Student Needs Identification are the Student Speak-Up and the Community Concerns Conference. While these methods reach different audiences, both use extensive group discussion and listing of individual opinions to harvest the concerns.

Once concerns have been gathered they should be sorted into categories. Those categories with the most expressions of concern should be dealt with first in the Concerns Analysis, (PAKs 2.2 and 2.3).

SELECTED REFERENCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Worldwide Education and Research Institute, 2315 Stringham Avenue, Salt Lake City, Utah.

NEXT STEP PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THIS PAK

Basic Program in Educational Planning and Problem Solving

Needs Assessment Source Book

Needs Assessment: A Manual of Procedures for Educators

Planning and Quality Assurance for Educational Needs Assessment

Conducting Public Opinion Surveys for Educators

Guidelines for Conducting a Community Analysis

Converting Educational Needs into Goals and Objectives

ADDITIONAL SOURCE:

Slonim, Morris James. Sampling in a Nutshell, New York, N. Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1960.

APPENDIX A

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE FOR GROUPS

Each PAK has been organized around a fundamental and widely recognized generalization of how people learn. Learning occurs more efficiently when an overview is presented first. Succeeding learning experiences then take the person deeper into each concept adding more specific details. There may be several levels of exposure until real expertise is developed.

Workshop Specifications

I.	Time Required:	Two hours
II.	Facilities:	One room for each 24 participants. Participants to be seated at tables (maximum of six per table). Rooms should provide adequate accoustics and physical comfort suitable for a workshop session.
III.	Equipment & Material Needs:	One overhead projector and viewing screen per room
		Power extension cord (1 per room)
		Transparency sheets
		Grease pencils
		Butcher paper
		Masking tape
		Chalkboard, chalk, eraser
		Name tags (if necessary)

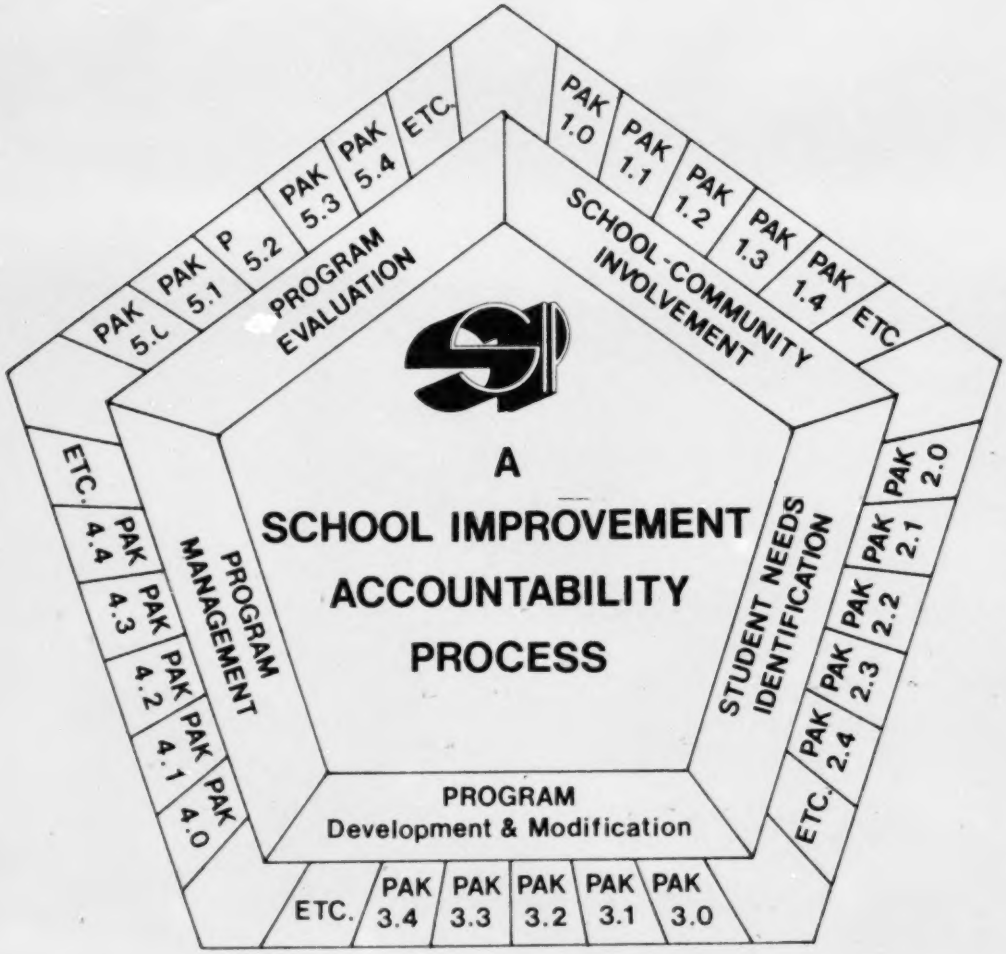
WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

The following sequence of activities is suggested and may be modified at your discretion.

1.	35 min.	Have the participants read pages 2 - 6. Share questions and reactions.
2.	35 min.	Have participants read pages 6 - 8. Share questions and reactions.
3.	25 min.	Have participants take the Evaluative Exercise #1 on page 9. Read page 10.
4.	15 min.	Conduct a Summary session. Be sure each participant is clear on the basic skills and principles presented in this PAK.
5.	10 min.	Call attention to the Summary, Page 10. Remind participants to complete a copy of the PAK critique form and turn it in to you.

NOTE: As quickly as possible, review the critique forms for feedback information that may be helpful during other workshops.

Total time: Approximately 2 hours.


A
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
ACCOUNTABILITY
PROCESS
PROGRAM EVALUATION
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
STUDENT NEEDS IDENTIFICATION
PROGRAM Development & Modification
PROGRAM MANAGEMENT
PAK 1.0
PAK 1.1
PAK 1.2
PAK 1.3
PAK 1.4
ETC.
PAK 2.0
PAK 2.1
PAK 2.2
PAK 2.3
PAK 2.4
ETC.
PAK 3.0
PAK 3.1
PAK 3.2
PAK 3.3
PAK 3.4
ETC.
PAK 4.0
PAK 4.1
PAK 4.2
PAK 4.3
PAK 4.4
ETC.
PAK 5.0
PAK 5.1
P 5.2
PAK 5.3
PAK 5.4
ETC.

APPENDIX B

ANSWER SHEET: EVALUATIVE EXERCISE #1 - DISTINGUISHING LEARNER-ORIENTED CONCERNS FROM SOLUTION-ORIENTED CONCERNS

1. _____
2. _____
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20. _____

ANSWERS:

EVALUATIVE EXERCISE #1 - DISTINGUISHING LEARNER-ORIENTED CONCERNS FROM SOLUTION-ORIENTED CONCERNS

1. L.O.
2. S.O.
3. S.O.
4. L.O.
5. L.O.
6. L.O.
7. S.O.
8. L.O.
9. S.O.
10. L.O.
11. L.O.
12. L.O.
13. L.O.
14. S.O.
15. S.O.
16. L.O.
17. L.O.
18. S.O.
19. S.O.
20. S.O.

PAK #2.1

SUPPLEMENTAL EVALUATIVE EXERCISE #2: DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN LEARNER-ORIENTED AND SOLUTION-ORIENTED CONCERNS

Each of the following statements of concern were taken from those gathered in a large needs assessment study. You are to indicate by a check mark in the appropriate colum on a copy of the answer sheet in Appendix B-2 whether each of the concern statements represents a learner-oriented concern and potential need (problem) or might be more appropriately classified as a solution-oriented concern.

1. *The art program in the school is poor.*
2. *Public opinion of teachers is deteriorating.*
3. *The district should hire teacher aides.*
4. *The schools do a poor job in preparing students to be responsible citizens.*
5. *The teaching of moral and ethical values should be given more emphasis in the schools.*
6. *Counselor participation in curriculum development is inadequate.*
7. *The English program is poor.*
8. *School district administration is not very effective.*
9. *There are too many class periods per day.*
10. *There is a need to involve students in district policy making.*
11. *In the schools, equal educational opportunity is not provided for minority group children.*
12. *Teacher organizations are ineffective.*
13. *Provisions for gifted students are inadequate.*
14. *Teacher-counselor communication is not very good.*
15. *Teacher-principal communication is not very good.*
16. *Provisions for slow learners in the schools are inadequate.*
17. *Provisions for emotionally disturbed children are inadequate in the schools.*
18. *The size of classes is too large.*
19. *Referral sources for students with special problems are inadequate.*
20. *There is a need for the public schools to retain well-trained teachers.*

Answers are to be found in Appendix B-5.

APPENDIX B

ANSWER SHEET: SUPPLEMENTAL EVALUATIVE EXERCISE #2: DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN LEARNER-ORIENTED AND SOLUTION-ORIENTED CONCERNS

1. _____
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20. _____

ANSWERS TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL EVALUATIVE EXERCISE #2 DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN LEARNER-ORIENTED AND SOLUTION-ORIENTED CONCERNS.

1. L.O.
2. S.O.
3. S.O.
4. L.O.
5. L.O.
6. S.O.
7. L.O.
8. S.O.
9. S.O.
10. L.O.
11. L.O.
12. S.O.
13. L.O.
14. S.O.
15. S.O.
16. L.O.
17. L.O.
18. S.O.
19. L.O.
20. S.O.

PAK #
(Please fill in number)

PAK CRITIQUE FORM

Please give vour assessment and comments on the following:

PROGRAM ELEMENT	OUT-STANDING	VERY GOOD	FAIR	POOR	VERY POOR	COMMENTS
1. The quality & relevance of the subject matter.						
2. The appropriateness and usefulness of the instructional materials.						
3. The timing or sequencing of the various items presented.						
4. The directing and assistance given on the exercise.						

Other comments or suggestions for improving this PAK:

If this PAK was used as part of a WORKSHOP training session, then please also complete the following:

PROGRAM ELEMENT	OUT-STANDING	VERY GOOD	FAIR	POOR	VERY POOR	COMMENTS
5. The deployment, grouping or planned interaction of the participants.						
6. The productivity and/or usefulness of the individual work session(s).						
7. The comments or assistance given to you on your selected problem.						